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Approved For Release 2003/02/27 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000900050014-8

State Dept. review completed

21 January 1958

BACKGROUND NOTE: NORTH AFRICA

I. Algeria

The Algerian rebellion--now well into fourth year--is a main preoccupation of France and the chief stumbling block in France's relations with Tunisia and Morocco.

A. French claims that Algerian Moslems (some 8,000,000 out of a population of over 9,000,000) are rallying to France and optimism that the new basic statute for Algeria can resolve the situation are believed unwarrantedly optimistic.

1. US Consul General Algiers says idea of "independence" has so permeated the Moslem population that no other permanent solution is possible.

B. The lull in rebel military activities could break at any time--because rebels [ ] have improved their combat potential. Rebel strength is still estimated at 25,000 full time fighters: manpower no problem and morale is high.

C. Military leaders said to have won ascendancy over pro-West political colleagues in direction of Algerian National Liberation Front. [ ]

II. Recent sharp deterioration in Tunisia's relations with France developed when Tunisian-based rebels clashed with French forces in Algeria on 11 January. Pending negotiations on common defense agreement and economic problems broken off.

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- A. Tunisians blame French Premier Gaillard for crisis--that he deliberately inflated incident on eve of vote of confidence to remain in power.
- B. Paris' demand that 4 French prisoners--held somewhere in Algeria by rebels--be handed over may boomerang. Rebels are attempting to use International Red Cross to force French recognition of rebels as a belligerent.
- C. Meanwhile, presence of some 5,000 well armed Algerian rebels on Tunisian soil is a threat to Tunisian stability.
- D. Relations with Tunisia is dominating foreign policy debate now underway in French National Assembly.

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### III. Morocco

While Morocco's relations with France are appreciably better than Tunisia's, Moroccan support for Algerian rebels is also main deterrent to the solution of outstanding problems in their relations

- A. Joint Moroccan-Tunisian offer to mediate a settlement of rebellion rejected (except as regards a cease-fire), but France may still use Moroccan services in exploratory contacts with Algerian leaders.
- B. Morocco may share Tunisian limelight during Assembly discussions because Casablanca was destination of Yugoslav ship seized by France on 18 January and cargo of 150 tons of arms--allegedly destined for Algerian rebels--confiscated.

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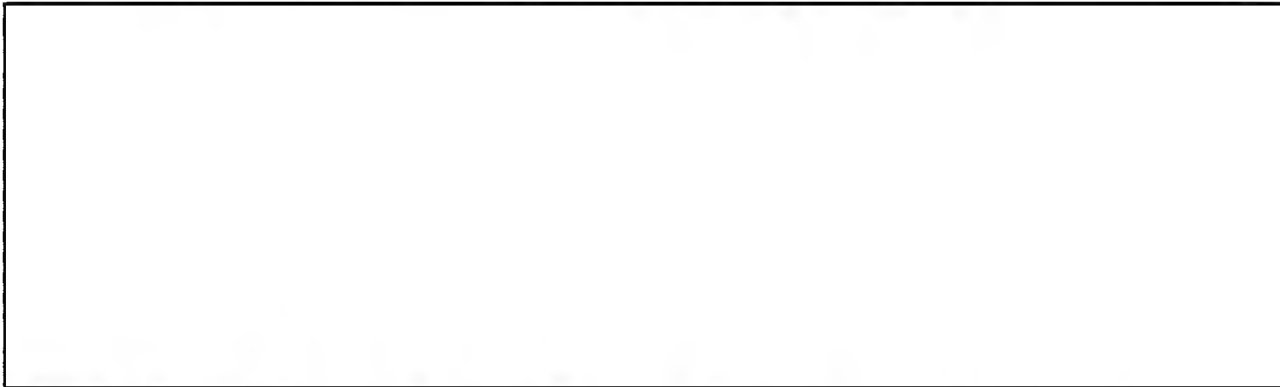
**IV. Spanish West Africa**

Military situation in the Ifni enclave appears generally quiet. Some minor skirmishing between Moroccan Army of Liberation irregulars and Spanish troops was reported to have occurred there last week.

A. However, since 1 January heavier fighting has occurred at at least two points in Spanish Sahara south of Morocco, most recently on 13-14 January.

1. Guerrillas appear to be building up their strength in this region and further clashes are probable.

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B. Spanish forces in the Ifni-Spanish Sahara area are estimated at 12,000 men. Of these, 4,000 are based at four points in the Spanish protectorate of Southern Morocco and in Spanish Sahara proper. Army of Liberation strength in the region as a whole probably totals about 6,000 men;

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France has an estimated 4,000-5,000 troops in Mauritania, probably some 2,000 in extreme western Algeria and a reported 50,000 based throughout Morocco.

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C. Relations between Madrid and Rabat at official level continue fairly amicable. Last week a preliminary agreement on procedure for retiring peseta from Morocco's northern zone initiated in Madrid.

1. French hopes of utilizing Moroccan mediation to bring about a cease-fire in Algeria is a limiting factor relative to French participation in any joint military operation in the western Sahara.

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